

INFANTRY LETTERS



CORRECTION TO "DESERT NAVIGATION"

In editing the articles that we used in our July-August 1990 issue, we made a rather serious mistake in the one by Major Richard G. Reynolds, titled "Desert Navigation" (pages 18-23).

In the fifth paragraph of the article (page 18), we said that the Sahara "measures 3,200 miles from north to south." It should have read that the Sahara "is 3,200 miles wide and between 1,000 and 1,200 miles from north to south."

We regret the error.

INFANTRY EDITORS

TOP GUN

The article "Infantry's Top Gun," by Colonel David H. Hackworth (INFANTRY, July-August 1990, pages 10-12) provided an excellent analysis of a problem in the Army and a proposed solution. Getting experienced company commanders by making this a major's position would go a long way toward improving our Army.

I would like to add, though, that although any command is valuable, if we want an officer to get experience in a particular field (or branch), it is equally critical what type of command he has. One of the great disservices to our current system and officer corps is the lie that "a command is a command." This may satisfy the personnel managers, but it does nothing to ensure that people really know what they should about their branch.

For an infantryman, there is only one job that teaches a captain what he should know—command of a line company. Our system should demand this before a captain can be promoted to major and certainly before he commands a line battalion. All of the other commands (head-

quarters companies, combat support companies, training companies, and the like) are great for second and third commands, but they can never provide the environment an officer needs to learn the heart of his trade.

If we truly want to have professionals running our Army, we need to allow them the training opportunities to develop properly. Our current system serves the bureaucracy and personnel system, but the needs of the individual (and by extension, the real needs of the system) are met only on a hit or miss basis. We can do better than this and should systematize what is right, not leave it to luck to decide who should get the line companies and who should not.

GREGORY T. BANNER
CPT, Special Forces

OLD PROFESSIONALS ARE GONE

As a professional NCO who has been kicking around the Army since 1961, I would like to congratulate Colonel David H. Hackworth on his article "Infantry's Top Gun" (INFANTRY, July-August 1990, pages 10-12).

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When I first joined the Army and went into combat, I was lucky enough to serve under quite a few of the old, professional company grade officers Colonel Hackworth describes. As he says, though, by the end of the 1960s these professionals were all gone.

The officer career system that has been in effect for the past 20 years or so has had a debilitating effect on the leadership at company level. The thought of having to go into combat again with many of the company commanders I have served under during the latter part of my career is pretty terrifying.

LEIGH F. WADE
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BRITISH, U.S. SYSTEMS DIFFERENT

Colonel David H. Hackworth's article "Infantry's Top Gun" (INFANTRY, July-August 1990, pages 10-12) once again raises the question of whether the Army should require more company level experience of its company commanders. The obvious answer is Yes. But we must also look at the feasibility of such a plan in an Army structured as ours is.

Colonel Hackworth touts the virtues of the British system, which provides multiple company commands to officers with 10 to 15 years of company level experience, and its success is unquestionable. But the system that allows such a structure is not as similar to our own as one might think.

The British Army is centered on the cohesion of its individual units. It is also smaller and not nearly as fluid as the U.S. Army. Tours for its average infantrymen are five to eight years, as opposed to one to five years in our Army. This develops a much stronger bond among its soldiers,

and the commander of such a stabilized unit undoubtedly has an easier time being a successful commander. One of the biggest problems a U.S. commander faces is that during a command tour of 12 to 24 months, simply because of personnel turnover, he will actually lead two or three different company-sized units.

In addition, since World War II the British Army has been a careerist force, for both officers and enlisted men. The mind-set of the British soldiers is quite different. This is not due entirely to longer enlistment requirements but also to a system that does not recruit soldiers by promising that the Army will be a stepping stone to a great civilian life. Each of their soldiers is assigned to a unit that will be his home for many years. This basic difference tends to shed a clearer light on why British company commanders appear to be more successful as individuals. Perhaps the unit an officer commands is just as important as the way he commands it.

To give company commanders this type of experience, the U.S. Army would have to be almost completely restructured. At present, an officer with more than a decade of company-level experience would not command a company for long. He would be moved to a level where his experience could benefit more than just one company. In our Army, this is a necessity because of personnel turnover. To allow an officer even two opportunities at company command, as a rule, would not equate to the British system unless our forces became much more stabilized.

Finally, we have to look at the availability of company command tours in terms of numbers. Company-level officers outnumber command positions by more than three to one. With company command being almost a doctrinal prerequisite for staff advancement, not to mention career advancement, each command-eligible officer strives for a chance at this job. To extend tenure or provide multiple commands to one officer would deny others the opportunity.

Certainly, there is no substitute for experience. More than one opportunity to command a company would vastly improve any leader. But the only way to do

this in our Army, with its present strength and its instability, would be to reduce the number of officers available to fill these command positions. One way of doing this would be to select some officers to be staff-tracked. This would also lessen the need to "ticket-punch" captains through one command tour in order to maintain fully manned staff positions.

Perhaps, as the Army reduces in size over the coming decades, it will become more practical to slow down the officer progression process to allow more time at company level for all officers.

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LEADERSHIP AND PT

In his article "Leadership and PT" (INFANTRY, July-August 1990, pages 34-36), Lieutenant Colonel Harry D. Stumpf made some good points on leadership. Unfortunately, though, he has missed the point of PT (physical training).

I agree that PT is a unit activity and that commanders should ensure maximum participation and enforce a strict uniform policy. But traditional unit PT consisting of calisthenics followed by a run in formation to a cadence—the regimented, disciplined aspect of PT, as Colonel Stumpf puts it—is not effective. The Army has realized this and through master fitness trainers is trying to change PT programs to challenge every soldier at his individual level of fitness.

Our soldiers need to be physically able to carry their load and endure the hardships of combat, and we owe it to them to prepare them as best we can. To say that soldiers who want to run harder or farther can run after duty hours is wishful but foolish thinking. When do soldiers have a chance or, after a full day of training, where do they find the energy and motivation?

You can run a challenging PT program and still build small unit cohesion. Make PT a unit activity. Let the NCOs run the program with guidance from the master fitness trainers in the company. Have the

officers participate and have everyone in the same uniform. Doing free body exercises (as many pushups or situps as they can in 60 seconds) instead of pushups to cadence doesn't reduce the unit cohesion that can be built, nor does it stifle the exercise of leadership. Running in ability groups still allows unit cohesion while it stresses each soldier at his individual level of fitness. Once a week or every other week, you can still conduct a company or battalion run with guidon for esprit de corps. But don't confuse this with physical training.

We need to get rid of the old mentality that PT should be done by the numbers. Leaders can still lead by example, and cohesion can still be built while the soldiers become fit to fight. After all, how good is a team that isn't fit enough to play the game?

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MAJ, Infantry
U.S. Exchange Tactics Instructor
Australian Infantry Center

ROTC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The Army ROTC Department at Worcester Polytechnic Institute is establishing an alumni association. The association will seek to support the cadets of the Institute and affiliated schools as well as help alumni maintain contact with the battalion and their classmates.

Alumni of WPI's ROTC program are invited to call me or Major Sayre at (508) 752-7209 or telefax (508) 831-5483, or send their names, addresses, and telephone numbers to Army ROTC, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609.

CLARENCE PLANT
SGM
Battalion Sergeant Major

ARMY MILITARY HISTORY WRITING CONTEST

Each year, the U.S. Army Center of Military History conducts the Army Military History Writing Contest. The 1990

contest will be held in accordance with the following rules:

Participation is limited to students who attended officer advanced courses and the Sergeants Major Academy at any time during calendar year 1990.

Entries must be previously unpublished manuscripts, 2,000 to 3,000 words (seven to ten pages), typed, double-spaced, in two copies. Documentation is required, but footnotes and endnotes are not included in the required length.

Essays should develop a limited historical theme related to the Army. Suggested topics are:

- World War II or Korean War battles and campaigns.
- The black experience during the Civil War, World War II, Korea, or Vietnam.
- Leadership and Training.
- Mexican border operations, Indian campaigns.
- Unit cohesion and stress in combat.
- Fighting outnumbered and winning.
- Logistics.

Entries must be mailed to the Center of Military History, ATTN: DAMH-FI (Writing Contest), Washington, DC 20314-0200, and must be postmarked by midnight, 31 December 1990.

The papers will be judged by a panel of military historians on the basis of their originality, historical accuracy, sources and documentation, style, and rhetoric, and their usefulness to today's Army leaders.

For more information, anyone who is interested may call me at AUTOVON 335-2905; commercial (202) 475-2905.

BILLY A. ARTHUR
Chief, Military History
Education Activity
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SMOKE/OBSCURANTS SYMPOSIUM

The U.S. Army Chemical Research, Development, and Engineering Center at Aberdeen, Maryland, is sponsoring the Smoke/Obscurants Symposium XV. The symposium will be held 16-18 April 1991 at the Kossiakoff Conference and Education Center, Johns Hopkins University, Laurel, Maryland.

The theme is "Measures/Countermeasures." Topics to be presented are smoke systems and materiel, smoke effects on electromagnetic systems, natural obscurants, operational uses of smoke and obscurants, effects of smoke and obscurants on health or the environment, and the effects of obscuration on sensors overhead.

Members of the Department of Defense, industry, academia, and allied nations are invited to submit papers on these topics; they may include classified material up to and including Secret level. The deadline for abstracts is 25 January 1991.

Further information is available from Judy Cole, Symposium Coordinator, telephone (804) 865-7604, telefax (804) 865-8721; or Walter Klimek, Symposium Chairman, telephone (301) 671-2260, AUTOVON 584-2260, or telefax (301) 671-2968.

JEANNE HAWTIN
Meetings Director

DOD TUITION-FREE MEDICAL SCHOOL

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, was established by an act of Congress in 1972. This fully accredited joint-service school is designed to provide the Department of Defense with a cadre of

career medical officers for the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the U.S. Public Health Service.

The medical students attending the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine are commissioned as second lieutenants or ensigns on active duty reserve status. They draw full military pay (approximately \$23,000 a year) and benefits while in school. There is no tuition, and all books and equipment are provided at no charge.

Students study the traditional civilian medical school curriculum, plus courses of direct military medical relevance. At graduation, they receive M.D. degrees and are promoted to captain or lieutenant and must serve seven years to pay back their education. The time spent in graduate medical education, such as internships or residencies, does not count toward this obligation.

Both civilians and military personnel with college degrees may apply for the four-year medical program. Civilian applicants may be no older than 27 when they enter the school. Applicants with military service may exceed the age limit by up to six years—to age 33—depending upon the amount of their prior service time. All applicants must meet the physical and personal qualifications for commissions in the uniformed services, as well as certain academic requirements.

The university also has a graduate program that leads to advanced degrees in the basic medical sciences.

More information on the Hebert School of Medicine is available from Office of Admissions, ATTN: PAC, Uniformed Services University, 4301 Jones Bridge Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-4799; telephone (202) 295-3101.

PATRICIA CAMPBELL
Director of Public Affairs

